



**USAID | AFGHANISTAN**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Solar Drying Technology Adds Value and Reduces Waste

**KFZ program is a USAID funded activity implemented by IRD.**

**Alternative Development Project**



***“Through dried-fruit and vegetable business, I support my family and paid my dues,”***

Zahir Jan is a farmer living in Zhari district of Kandahar Province. He grows fruits and vegetables that need to be sold in the market immediately after harvesting. During the harvest season, when there is a large supply of vegetables and fruits, Zahir, like many other farmers, have to sell their products at lower market prices or dehydrate it in the sun in the traditional method. Traditional sun-drying methods for fruits and vegetables have several drawbacks, including a lengthy processing time, additional labor and dust contamination. These factors undermine the quality and price of the products. The farmers cannot compete with the imported dried-fruits and vegetables.

USAID’s Kandahar Food Zone (KFZ) program trained 100 farmers in Panjwayi, Zhari, Shah Wali Kot, and Kandahar city in solar drying techniques for fruits and vegetables. The program provided each farmer with a set of solar drying equipment, including protective gloves, bucket, solar dehydrator, cutting board, plastic basin, stainless steel tray, colander, cutlery, cupboard, plastic for table, cleaning cloth, scale, approve and mask, selling materials, processing tables, scissor and stapler.

After completing the training, Zahir started his own dried-fruit and vegetable business. Now he is looking for local and international wholesalers to extend his business. “I have been looking for business people in the field to extend my small-scale business and establish a dried-fruit and vegetable cooperative,” he says.

Zahir believes that solar drying technology will reduce wastage of fruits and vegetables.

Zahir employs his family members to dehydrate fruits and vegetables. Previously he depending on his uncle for financing, but now he is self-sufficient. “After the solar-drying training and the tools that I have received from USAID, I started a small family business,” Zahir

said. “Through dried-fruit and vegetable business, I support my family and pay my dues,” he added.

Zahir is planning to buy vegetables and fruits during the harvest season and supply it in off-season as dried products. Solar drying has allowed Zahir to reduce traditional drying times of 7 – 8 days to less than 2 days. Moreover, it has improved the quality of the products, increasing Zahir’s income by supplying dried tomatoes, okras and eggplants.

Kandahar Food Zone Program interventions are designed to strengthen and diversify legal rural livelihoods in targeted districts by identifying and addressing the root causes of instability that lead to opium poppy cultivation. More than 800 people have benefited from alternative livelihood activities of the three-year, \$27.7 million program, which began in July 2013. The program also rehabilitated 168.3 km canals affecting more than 200,00 people.